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ART. VI.—*Two Ways of Dying for a Husband.* 1. *Dying to keep him, or Tortesa the Usurer.* 2. *Dying to lose him, or Bianca Visconti.* By N. P. WILLIS, Esq., Author of “Pencillings by the Way,” “The Slingsby Papers,” “Melanie,” &c. &c. London: Hugh Cunningham. 1839. 8vo. pp. 245.

THE variety and versatility of Mr. Willis's literary abilities have been strikingly displayed within the last few years. He writes a prose style, which, for splendor of diction, brilliancy and tastefulness of ornament, and musical flow, will bear a favorable comparison with that of any author in the walks of elegant literature, whether in England or in the United States. His language possesses that curious but indescribable felicity, that clearness and graphic power, and that gracefulness of racy idiomatic expression, which wind their way into every reader's mind, and enchant his senses by their manifold fascinations. His works have had an almost unprecedented circulation, in spite of certain grave faults, which drew down upon them the heavy censure of some of the British critics. But the critics are not omnipotent; and the writings of a man of genius, like Mr. Willis, however light and transient the theme, will be popular, will be read. His “Pencillings by the Way,” therefore, notwithstanding their offences against the laws of society in some instances, continue to be republished, adorned by all the luxury of the British press. We understand that a new edition of his collected “Poems,” is about to appear in the style of Rogers's magnificent volumes.

But, as we have, on a former occasion, presented our view of Willis's poetry at some length, we do not intend to repeat the observations we then made;* we shall simply give a brief account of the two dramatic poems, the somewhat whimsical titles of which are placed at the head of this paper. They are marked by the usual excellences of the author's style. The dialogue is spirited, rising sometimes to a high strain of poetry; the words are aptly chosen, and the lines are constructed according to the true dramatic style; that is, they are elevated beyond the language of prose, without having the stately march of the heroic measure. The

* See *North American Review*, Vol. XLIII. pp. 384 *et seq.*

story of Tortesa is as follows. He is a usurer, who has purchased the lands of Count Falcone, an impoverished Florentine nobleman, but has agreed to restore them, on condition of receiving Isabella de Falcone, the Count's beautiful daughter, for his wife. The first scene of the play opens just after the bargain has been concluded. The Count is about to set forth with the Duke of Florence ; and the miser demands, that the nuptials shall be celebrated immediately on his return, and that, in the mean time, Isabella shall be kept in privacy.

“ Seal your door up till you come back again !
 I 'd have no foplings tampering with my wife !
 None of your painted jackdaws from the court,
 Sneering and pitying her ! My lord Falcone !
 Shall she be private ? ”

— p. 2.

The Count consents, and leaves him ; whereupon Tortesa breaks out into the following soliloquy.

“ Oh, omnipotence of money !
 Ha ! ha ! Why, there 's the haughtiest nobleman
 That walks in Florence. *He* ! — whom I have bearded, —
 Checked, — made conditions to, — shut up his daughter, —
 And all with *money* ! They should pull down churches,
 And worship it ! Had I been *poor*, that man
 Would see me rot ere give his hand to me.
 I, — as I stand here, — dressed thus, — looking thus, —
 The same in all, — save money in my purse, —
 He would have scorned to let me come so near
 That I could breathe on him ! Yet, that were little, —
 For pride sometimes outdoes humility ;
 And your great man will please to be familiar,
 To show how he can stoop. But halt you there !
 He *has* a jewel that you may not name !
 His *wife* 's above you ! You 're no company
 For his most noble *daughter* ! You are brave, —
 'T is nothing ! comely, — nothing ! honorable, —
 You are a *phœnix* of all human virtues, —
 But, while your blood 's mean, there 's a frozen bar
 Betwixt you and a *lady*, that will melt, —
 Not with religion, — scarcely with the grave, —
 But, like a mist, with *money* ! ”

— pp. 3, 4.

The usurer is now visited by a tradesman, and the glover's daughter Zippa, bringing his wedding gloves. A spirited dialogue follows ; and Zippa resolves to try her hand at a

counterplot for the purpose of breaking off the match. The next scene opens in the *studio* of Angelo, a poor painter. The contrast, between the aspiring genius of the artist and the practical views of the servant Tomaso, is very amusingly carried out. We subjoin a part of the dialogue.

“ [*The Painter’s Study. Angelo Painting. Tomaso in the foreground, arranging a meagre repast.*]

Tomaso. A thrice-picked bone, a stale crust, and — excellent water? Will you to breakfast, Master Angelo?

Angelo. Look on this touch, good Tomaso, if it be not life itself, — (*Draws him before his easel.*) Now, what think’st thou?

Tomaso. Um, — fair! fair enough!

Angelo. No more?

Tomaso. Till it mend my breakfast, I will never praise it! Fill me up that *outline*, Master Angelo! (*Takes up the naked bone.*) Color me that water. To what end dost thou dabble there?

Angelo. I am weary of telling thee to what end. Have patience, Tomaso!

Tomaso (coaxingly.) Would’st thou but paint the goldsmith a sign, now, in good fair letters!

Angelo. Have I no genius for the art, think’st thou?

Angelo. Thou! ha! ha!

Angelo. By thy laughing, thou would’st say *no*!

Tomaso. Thou a genius! Look! Master Angelo! Have I not seen thee every day since thou wert no bigger than thy pencil?

Angelo. And if thou hast?

Tomaso. Do I not know thee from crown to heel? Dost thou not come in at that door as I do? — sit down in that chair as I do? — eat, drink, and sleep, as I do? Dost thou not call me Tomaso, and I thee Angelo?

Angelo. Well!

Tomaso. Then how canst thou have genius? Are there no marks? Would I clap thee on the back, and say good morrow? Nay, look thee! would I stand here telling thee in my wisdom what thou art, if thou wert a genius? Go to, Master Angelo! I love thee well, but thou art comprehensible!

Angelo. But think’st thou never of my works, Tomaso?

Tomaso. Thy works! Do I not grind thy paints? Do I not see thee take up thy palette, place thy foot thus, and dab here, dab there? I tell thee thou hast never done stroke yet, I could not take the same brush and do after thee. Thy works, truly!

Angelo. How think'st thou would Donatello paint, if he were here?

Tomaso. Donatello? I will endeavour to show thee! (*Takes the palette and brush with a mysterious air.*) The pictures should be there! His pencil, — (*throws down Angelo's pencil, and seizes a broom*), his pencil should be as long as this broom! He should raise it thus, — with his eyes rolling thus, — and with his body thrown back thus!

Angelo. What then?

Tomaso. Then he should see something in the air, — a sort of a hm — ha — r — r — rrrr, — (you understand.) And he first strides off here and looks at it, — then he strides off there and looks at it, — then he looks at his long brush, — then he makes a dab! dash! flash! (*Makes three strokes across Angelo's picture.*)

Angelo. Villain, my picture! Tomaso! (*Seizes his sword.*) With thy accursed broom thou hast spoiled a picture Donatello could ne'er have painted! Say thy prayers, for, by the Virgin! — ”

— pp. 12—15.

The scene is interrupted by the arrival of the Duke and his attendants, by whom old Tomaso is mistaken for the artist. The Duke, delighted with the artist's work, requires Falcone to commission him to paint a portrait of Isabella for the Duchess. Falcone consents; and thus the youthful artist is introduced into the presence of the peerless beauty. The character of the enthusiastic artist is well conceived and highly wrought. Of course, he falls in love, and, of course, his love is returned; and here the plot begins to be unfolded. The old miser comes unexpectedly upon them, in this their first interview, and very naturally falls into a towering passion at the disregard of his demand, that his bride should be kept in privacy.

In the next act the plot grows more complicated. Old Tortesa is half enamoured of Zippa; Zippa is desperately in love with Angelo, whom she has long known; Isabella is already enchanted with the lofty genius and imaginative character of the painter; so that things have really come to a serious pass. Zippa presents herself to Isabella, and offers her services; and the dialogue between the high-born lady and the lowly damsels, who are, unknown to each other, passionately in love with our friend Angelo, is full of poetical beauty and natural feeling. On the Count's return from riding with the Duke, he finds the miser awaiting him. Soon

after, a page from the Duke comes in, with a letter for the Count, commanding him to reserve his daughter, to wed the young Count Julian, the Duke having secretly been informed,

“ By what means yet I know not, that my need
 Spurs me to marry an unwilling daughter.
 He bars the match ! redeems my lands and palace,
 And has enriched the young Count Julian,
 For whom he bids me keep my daughter’s hand ! ” — p. 56.

But, for reasons of her own, the daughter is not at all satisfied with this new arrangement, and claims of Tortesa the fulfilment of their troth, not less to the astonishment of that worthy gentleman, than to the indignation of her father ; and here ends act second. The third act begins with a scene between Angelo and Tomaso, showing the change which two hundred ducats had wrought in the servant’s estimation of his master’s genius.

“ [Angelo discovered in his studio, painting upon the picture of Isabella.]

ANGELO.

My soul is drunk with gazing on this face.
 I reel and faint with it. In what sweet world
 Have I traced all its lineaments before ?
 I know them. Like a troop of long-lost friends,
 My pencil wakes them with its eager touch,
 And they spring up, rejoicing. Oh, I ’ll gem
 The heaven of Fame with my irradiate pictures,
 Like kindling planets, — but this glorious one
 Shall be their herald, like the evening star,
 First-lit, and lending of its fire to all.
 The day fades, — but the lamp burns on within me.
 My bosom has no dark, no sleep, no change
 To dream or calm oblivion. I work on
 When my hand stops. The light tints fade. Good night,
 Fair image of the fairest thing on earth,
 Bright Isabella !

(Leans on the rod with which he guides his hand, and remains looking at his picture.)

[Enter Tomaso with two bags of money.]

Tomaso. For the most excellent painter, Angelo, two hundred ducats ! The genius of my master flashes upon me. The Duke’s greeting and two hundred ducats ! If I should

not have died in my blindness but for this eye-water, may I be hanged. (*Looks at Angelo.*) He is studying his picture. What an air there is about him, — lofty, unlike the vulgar ! Two hundred ducats ! (*Observes Angelo's hat on the table.*) It strikes me now, that I can see genius in that hat. It is not like a common hat. Not like a bought hat. The rim turns to the crown with an intelligence. (*Weighs the ducats in his hand.*) Good heavy ducats. What it is to refresh the vision ! I have looked round, ere now, in this very chamber, and fancied that the furniture expressed a melancholy dulness. When he hath talked to me of his pictures, I have seen the chairs smile. Nay, as if shamed to listen, the very table has looked foolish. Now, all about me expresseth a choice peculiarity, — as you would say, How like a genius to have such chairs ! What a painter-like table ! Two hundred ducats !

Angelo. What hast thou for supper ?

Tomaso. Two hundred ducats, my great master !

Angelo, (absently.) A cup of wine ! Wine, Tomaso ! [Sits down.]

Tomaso. (So would the great Donatello have sat upon his chair ! His legs thus ! His hand falling thus !) (*Aloud.*) There is nought in the cellar but stale beer, my illustrious master ! (Now, it strikes me, that his shadow is unlike another man's, — of a pink tinge, somehow, — yet that may be fancy.)

Angelo. Hast thou no money ? Get wine, I say !

Tomaso. I saw the duke in the market-place, who called me Angelo, (we shall rue that trick yet,) and with a gracious smile asked me if thou hadst paid the twenty flasks.

Angelo, (not listening.) Is there no wine ?

Tomaso. I said to his grace, No ! Pray mark the sequel : In pity of my thirst, the Duke sends me two, — ahem ! — one hundred ducats. Here they are !

Angelo. Didst thou say the wine was on the lees ?

Tomaso. With these fifty ducats we shall buy nothing but wine. (He will be rich with fifty.)

Angelo. What saidst thou ?

Tomaso. I spoke of twenty ducats sent thee by the duke. Wilt thou finger them ere one is spent ?

Angelo. I asked thee for wine, — I am parched.

Tomaso. Of these ten ducats, think'st thou we might spend one for a flask of better quality ?

Angelo. Lend me a ducat, if thou hast one, and buy wine presently. Go !

Tomaso. I'll lend it thee, willingly, my illustrious master. It is my last, but as much thine as mine.

Angelo. Go ! Go !

Tomaso. Yet wait ! There 's a scrap of news ! Falcone's daughter marries Tortesa, the usurer ! To-morrow is the bridal.

Angelo. How ?

Tomaso. I learned it in the market-place ! There will be rare doings !

Angelo. Dog ! Villain ! Thou hast lied ? Thou dar'st not say it !

Tomaso. Hey ! Art thou mad ? Nay, — borrow thy ducat where thou canst ! I 'll spend that 's my own. Adieu, master ! ” — pp. 62 — 66.

Tortesa enters with a look of self-complacency ; and the irritated painter makes a violent assault upon him, and beats him at last off the stage. Angry at the apparent fickleness and falsehood of Isabella, the artist turns her portrait to the wall, and replaces it with Zippa's. Isabella enters, under the disguise of a monk. They converse about the pictures ; and Isabella, to test his feelings with regard to herself, undertakes to point out blemishes in the face. We give part of the dialogue.

“ *Isabella.* Fair signor, by your leave, I 've heard it said
That in the beauty of a human face
The God of Nature never writ a lie.

Angelo. 'T is likely true !

Isabella. That howsoe'er the features
Seem fair at first, a blemish on the soul
Has its betraying speck that warns you of it.

Angelo. It should be so, indeed !

Isabella. Nay, — here 's a face
Will show at once if it be true or no.
At the first glance 't is fair !

Angelo. Most heavenly fair !

Isabella. Yet, in the lip, methinks, there lurks a
shadow, —
Something, — I know not what, — but in it lies
The devil you spoke of !

Angelo. Ay, — but 't is not there !
Not in her lip ! Oh no ! Look elsewhere for it.
'T is passionately bright, — but lip more pure
Ne'er passed unchallenged through the gate of heaven.
Believe me, 't is not there !

Isabella. How falls the light ?
I see a gleam not quite angelical
About the eye. May be the light falls wrong —

Angelo, (drawing her to another position.)
Stand here ! D' ye see it now ?

Isabella. 'T is just so here !

Angelo, (sweeps the air with his brush.)
There 's some curst cobweb hanging from the wall
That blurs your sight. Now, look again !

Isabella. I see it
Just as before.

Angelo. What ! still ? You 've turn'd an eyelash
Under the lid. Try how it feels with winking.

Is 't clear ?

Isabella. 'T was never clearer !

Angelo. Then, old man !
You 'd best betake you to your prayers apace !
For you 've a failing sight, death's sure forerunner, —
And cannot pray long. Why, that eye 's a star,
Sky-lit as Hesperus, and burns as clear.
If you e'er marked the zenith at high noon,
Or midnight, when the blue lifts up to God, —
Her eye 's of that far darkness !

Isabella, (smiling aside.) Stay, — 't is gone !
A blur was on my sight, which, passing from it,
I see as you do. Yes, — the eye is clear.
The forehead only, now I see so well,
Has in its arch a mark infallible
Of a false heart beneath it.

Angelo. Show it to me !

Isabella. Between the eyebrows there !

Angelo. I see a tablet
Whereon the Saviour's finger might have writ
The new commandment. When I painted it
I plucked a just-blown lotus from the shade,
And shamed the white leaf till it seemed a spot, —
The brow was so much fairer ! Go ! old man,
Thy sight fails fast. Go ! go !

Isabella. The nostril 's small, —
Is 't not ?

Angelo. No !

Isabella. Then the cheek 's awry so near it,
It makes it seem so !

Angelo. Out ! thou cavilling fool !
Thou 'rt one of those, whose own deformity
Makes all thou seest look monstrous. Go and pray
For a clear sight, and read thy missal with it.
Thou art a priest and livest by the altar,

Yet dost not recognise Heaven's imprest seal,
Set on that glorious beauty !

Isabella, (aside.) (Oh, he loves me !
Loves me as genius loves, — ransacking earth,
And ruffling the forbidden flowers of heaven
To make celestial incense of his praise.
High-thoughted Angelo ! He loves me well !
With what a gush of all my soul I thank him, —
But he 's to win yet, and the time is precious.)
(*To Angelo.*) Signor, I take my leave.

Angelo. Good day, old man,
And if thou com'st again, bring new eyes with thee,
Or thou wilt find scant welcome.

Isabella. You shall like
These same eyes well enough when next I come ! ”

— pp. 74 — 79.

Meanwhile the scheme contrived between Zippa and Isabella, to make the usurer marry the former, has been completed ; but, when Zippa learns that Angelo is the object of Isabella's passion, she rushes in anger to her presence. A dialogue between these lovelorn persons, of high wrought poetic beauty, follows. Isabella finally, after the example of Juliet, resolves to take a composing draught, and so escape the marriage with Tortesa. The wedding pomp and preparation, and the terror caused by the supposed death of the bride ; the funeral services, the artist following the corse, the usurer lagging behind, and his interview with Zippa, who persuades him that Angelo means to steal the body by night ; the setting of guards, the lady's recovery, and her reappearance at the door of her father's palace, who thinks it to be his daughter's ghost ; her being taken up by Tomaso, Angelo's servant, and conveyed to his master's house, fill up the fourth act.

The fifth act discovers Angelo in his *studio*, with Isabella. In the mean time, the disappearance of the body has created terror, and fixed suspicion upon the artist. Tortesa approaches with officers and a guard, to search the premises. A scuffle ensues, but Angelo is disarmed. Isabella, however, has removed the picture from the frame, and taken its place herself. Tortesa is deceived by the *tableau*, and gazes with admiration and wonder upon the supposed portrait. One of the soldiers, however, finds Isabella's veil, that

“ Was o'er the face of that unhappy lady
When laid in sanctuary.”

Upon the strength of this evidence, the artist is seized and carried before the Duke. The witnesses have been arrayed against him, but

“ He makes no defence
Beyond a firm denial.”

when, just as sentence is going to be passed upon him, Isabella, who has followed him to the court, under the disguise of a monk, throws off the cowl, and falls at the feet of the Duke. Of course everybody is highly surprised. Falcone exclaims, “ My daughter.” Angelo groans out, “ Lost,” and Tortesa says, “ Alive !” and Zippa, “ Tortesa 'll have her !” but she is mistaken. A wonderful change is working in Tortesa's heart, and after a few preliminary twistings and turnings in the dialogue, during which he makes a very handsome speech to Isabella, so very handsome that she really begins to entertain some relenting thoughts, he gives Angelo a deed

“ Of the Falcone palaces and lands,
And all the moneys forfeit ”

by Isabella's father, and the lady seems, for some time, to be at a loss how to act. But after a little jealous extravagance on the part of Angelo, in which Tortesa finds it necessary to fight with him and disarm him, the trouble is ended by Tortesa's proposing to take Zippa, in the following very sensible lines.

“ Fair Zippa ! in this crossed and tangled world
Few wed the one they could have loved the best,
And fewer still wed well for happiness !
We each have lost to-day what best we love.
But as the drops, that mingled in the sky
Are torn apart in the tempestuous sea,
Yet with a new drop tremble into one,
We two, if you 're content, may swim together !
What say you ? ”

— pp. 138, 139.

And what could a discreet young woman say, under such circumstances ?

“ I have thought on it before,
When I believed you cold and treacherous ;
'T is easy when I know you kind and noble.”

It cannot be denied, that this piece shows a good deal of dramatic genius ; but still, when we look carefully into the plot, we must admit that it is very imperfectly constructed ; that the parts are not well harmonized ; that it has violent changes of character and transitions of feeling, which may pass unnoticed amidst the hurry of the stage and the display of scenic pomp, but which stand prominently forward, when the play is subjected to the reader's unclouded judgment. How, for instance, when the guards were set around the sanctuary which held the supposed body of Isabella, to prevent Angelo's entrance, could the lady herself escape ? how could she get out, when Angelo could not get in ? And how could Tortesa be so wrought upon, first by the supposed death of Isabella, and, secondly, by her unexpected return to life, by which it appeared that he had been deceived ; how, under all these circumstances, could he be so wrought upon as to fall actually in love with the lady, and through the influence of this very love, to do a deed of munificent generosity for the purpose of promoting her marriage with his rival ? It seems to us, that this is a revolution of character which sets dramatic propriety and probability at defiance.

We pass to "*Bianca Visconti.*" The principal characters of this piece are historical. Francesco Sforza was the second of this name, son of the celebrated peasant warrior of Cotignola, who was the chief support of Joanna Second, the queen of Naples. But Mr. Willis has connected his drama by very slight threads with the actual history of the times in which the scene is laid. We do not undertake to decide how far the poet is bound to follow the course of history step by step. We would not condemn him to the task of hunting up all the musty records in the Ducal libraries of Italy, and of studying all the volumes of the "*Art of verifying Dates.*" Undoubtedly, if a decided poetic effect is to be gained by sacrificing a lesser historical truth to a greater truth of art, the poet is justified in doing so. And there are many subjects which blend so much of fiction with historical truth, that the poet may use them as he pleases, consulting only his own judgment and the requisitions of his art. At the same time, the well-established facts of history are not to be distorted ; nor are they to be forced out of their places, for the purpose of forming more striking poetical groups and combinations than would otherwise be possible. Whenever this is done,

it is a defect in the poetical work, let it be sanctioned by ever so many great literary names. The plays of Shakspeare and the novels of Walter Scott exhibit examples of this, but they cannot justify it.

Now in the play before us, Mr. Willis has well filled out the historical outlines of the character of Francesco Sforza ; but the principal events of his life, those on which the drama turns, are taken wholly out of their actual connexion; in short, history is falsified, in order to work out the dramatic effect which the author was aiming at, when he selected this portion of Milanese history. The drama opens with a threatened attack upon Milan by the army of Sforza, who has been promised for many years the hand of the daughter of Philip Maria Visconti, the reigning duke. But according to history, Bianca Visconti was a natural child of the Duke, and had married Sforza some years before. The marriage takes place, but Sforza treats his bride with indifference, having been made, by the intrigues of Sarpellione, the Neapolitan ambassador, to believe that she has loved another. Sforza forms ambitious hopes of being raised to the sovereignty of Milan ; but unexpectedly Bianca's page, young Giulio, proves to be the Duke's son, and of course heir to the crown. Bianca overhears a conspiracy to assassinate her husband, as he lies asleep in the afternoon. Resolved to secure her husband's love at all hazards, she contrives to draw him away, and to manage that her brother shall take his place. Giulio is slain, mistaken by the assassin for Sforza. But according to history the last Duke Visconti had no other child but Bianca ; the existence of Giulio, and his murder through the instrumentality of Bianca, are fictions. The plot proceeds. Bianca's reason is overthrown by remorse ; but still she is determined that her husband shall have the crown. And the last thing she does is to place it upon his head. The facts are, that, after the death of old Visconti, the magistrates of Milan attempted to restore to their country her ancient liberties ; that Sforza was employed by them at the head of the Milanese armies, and that they were finally compelled, being unable to maintain themselves against the dangers that were threatening them on every side, to elect Sforza duke ; and he established his family accordingly in the sovereignty of Milan, where they maintained themselves for the greater part of two centuries. Now, whether the real facts of history are sufficient to form the

basis of a drama, we do not know, having never made the attempt ; but it is plain to us, that the poet has no right, in a case like the present, to put such a wholly wrong face upon history, as he has done here ; and, in particular, that he has no right to attribute to Bianca Visconti a crime so horrible as consenting to the murder of her brother, merely to remove an obstacle from her husband's way to the throne.

But the drama is worked up with very great power. Some passages of it Mr. Willis has never surpassed. The short passage below, for instance, where Bianca gives vent to her feelings, when she is first told she is to be married to Sforza.

“ *Bianca.*

To marry Sforza !

My dream come true ! my long, long-cherished dream !
The star come out of heaven that I had worshipped !
The paradise I built with soaring fancy,
And filled with rapture, like a honey-bee,
Dropped from the clouds at last ! Am I awake ?
Am I awake, dear Giulio !

Page, (half advancing to her.) Noble Mistress !

Bianca. Thank God they speak to me ! It is no dream !
It was *this* hand my father took to tell me, —
It was with *these* lips that I tried to speak, —
It was *this* heart that beat its giddy prison
As if th' exulting joy new-sprung within it
Would out and fill the world !

. Wed him to-morrow !
So suddenly a wife ! Will it seem modest,
With but twelve hours of giddy preparation

To come a bride to church ? Will he remember
I was ten years ago affianced to him ?

I have had time to think on 't ! Oh, I 'll tell him, —
When I dare speak I 'll tell him, — how I 've loved him !
And day and night dreamed of him, and through all

The changing wars treasured the solemn troth

Broke by my father ! If he listens kindly,

I 'll tell how I fed my eyes upon him

In Venice at his triumph, — when he walked

Like a descended god beside the Doge,

Who thanked him for his victories, and the people,

From every roof and balcony, by thousands,

Shouted out, ‘ Sforza ! Live the gallant Sforza ! ’

I was a child then, — but I felt my heart

Grow, in one hour, to woman ! ” — pp. 165 — 167,

And the following, when her dream of love is first rudely broken by the apparent indifference of Sforza.

Bianca. Dost think this ring a pretty one, my Lord !

Sforza. Ay, 't is a pretty ring ! I have one here
Marancio gave me, — Giacomo Marancio.

The ring his wife sent, — but you 've heard the story ?

Bianca. I think I never heard it.

Sforza. She 's a woman
The heart grows but to speak of. She was held
A hostage by the Milanese, (I pray you
Pardon the mention,) when 'twixt them and me
Marancio held a pass. Her life was threatened
If by his means I crossed the Adige. She —
(Brave heart ! I warn to speak of her !) found means
To send to him this ring ; wherein is writ
'He who loves most, loves honor best.' You 'll see it
Here o' th' inside.

Bianca. Did you see this lady ?

Sforza. I hazarded a battle three days after
With perilous odds, only to bring her off, —
And would have sold my life for 't.

Bianca. Did you see her ?

Sforza. I gave her to Marancio when I took
The ring of him.

Bianca. My Lord ! speak you so warmly
Of any other woman ?

Sforza, (rising and taking his helmet.)

Nay, I know not.

There are some qualities that women have
Which are less worthy, but which warm us more
Than speaking of their virtues. I remember
The fair Giovanna in her pride at Naples.
Gods ! what a light enveloped her ! She left
Little to shine in history, — but her beauty
Was of that order that the universe
Seemed governed by her motion. Men looked on her
As if her next step would arrest the world ;
And as the sea-bird seems to rule the wave
He rides so buoyantly, all things around her, —
The glittering army, the spread gonfalon,
The pomp, the music, the bright sun in heaven, —
Seemed glorious by her leave.

Bianca, (rising and going to the window.)

There 's emulation

Of such sweet praise, my Lord ! Did you not hear

The faint note of a nightingale ?

Sforza. More like
A far-heard clarion, methought ! They change
The sentinels perchance. 'T is time Rossano
Awaits me on the ramparts.

Bianca. Not to-night.
Go not abroad to-night, my Lord !
Sforza. For a brief hour, sweet ! The old soldier loves
To gossip of the fields he 's lost and won,
And I, no less, to listen. Get to bed !

I 'll follow you anon. [*Exit Sforza.*]

Bianca. He does not love me !
I never dreamed of this ! To be his bride
Was all the heaven I looked for ! Not to love me
When I have been ten years affianced to him ! —
When I have lived for him, — shut up my heart,
With every pulse and hope, for his use only, —
Worshipped — O God ! idolatrously loved him !

Why has he sought to marry me ? Why still
Renew the broken pledge my father made him ?
Why, for ten years, with war and policy,
Strive for my poor alliance ?

He must love me,
Or I shall break my heart ! I never had
One other hope in life ! I never linked
One thought, but to this chain ! I have no blood, —
No breath, — no being, — separate from Sforza !
Nothing has any other name ! The sun
Shined like his smile, — the lightning was his glory, —
The night his sleep, and the hushed moon watched o'er
him ; —

Stars writ his name, — his breath hung on the flowers, —
Music had no voice but to say *I love him*,
And life no future, but his love for me !
Whom does he love ? Marancio's wife ? He praised
Only her courage ! Queen Giovanna's beauty ?
'T is dust these many years ! There is no sign
He loves another ; and report said ever
His *Glory* was his mistress. *Can he love ?*
Shame on the doubt ! 'T was written in the ring,
' He who loves *most* loves honor best,' — and Sforza
Is made too like a god to lack a heart.
And so, I breathe again ! To make him love me
Is all my life now ! to pry through his nature,

And find his heart out. *That's* wrapped in his glory !
 I 'll feed his glory then ! He praised Giovanna
 That she was royal and magnificent, —
 Ay, — that 's well thought on too ! How should an eye,
 Dazzled with war and warlike pomp like Sforza's,
 Find pleasure in simplicity like mine !

(*Looks at her dress.*)

I 'm a Duke's daughter, and I 'll wear the look on 't !
 Unlock my jewels and my costly robes,
 And, while I keep his show-struck eye upon me,
 Watch for a golden opportunity
 To build up his renown !

.' And so farewell
 The gentle world I 've lived in ! Farewell all
 My visions of a world for two hearts only, —
 Sforza's and mine ! If I outlive this change,
 So brief and yet so violent within me,
 I 'll come back in my dreams, O childish world !
 If not, — a broken heart blots out remembrance."

— pp. 186 — 191.

We give but one extract more.

"*Bianca*. They who love stillness follow us ! The brain
 Grows giddy with the never-wearying dance,
 And music's pause is sweet as its beginning.
 Shut the doors, Giulio ! *Sarpellione* ! enter !
 You 're welcome to Trophonius' cave ! We 'll hold
 The Court of Silence, and I 'll play the Queen.
 My brave Lord, you shall doff that serious air,
 And be court favorite, — sit you at our feet !

Sforza. Too envious a place and office both !
 I 'll sit here with Rossano. Honor's flower, —
 That lifts a bold head in the world, — at court
 Looks for the lily's hiding-place.

Sarpellione, (*aside*.) (What trick
 Lies in this new humility.) The lily
 Is lowly born, and knows its place, my Lord !

Bianca. Yet is it sought with pains while the rose with-
 ers !

Sarpellione. The rose lifts to the sun its flowering tree,
 And all its parts are honored, — while the lily
 Upon one fragrant stem rears all its beauty, —
 And its coarse family of leaves are left
 To lie on th' earth they cling to.

Sforza, (*to Rossano, with whom he has been conversing
 apart*.) (I 've sure news

He was worse yesterday !)

(*Bianca rising with dignity, and descending from the ducal chair.*)

Bianca. Now, since the serpent
Misled our mother, never was fair truth
So subtly turned to error. If the rose
Were born a lily, and, by force of heart
And eagerness for light, grew tall and fair,
'T were a true type of the first fiery soul
That makes a low name honorable. They
Who take it by inheritance alone, —
Adding no brightness to it, — are like stars
Seen in the ocean, that were never there
But for the bright originals in Heaven !

Sarpellione, (sneeringly.) Rest to the gallant soul of the *first Sforza* !

Bianca. Amen ! but triple glory to the second !
I have a brief tale for thine ear, Ambassador !

Sarpellione. I listen, Lady !

Bianca. Mark the moral, Sir !

An eagle once from the Euganean hills
Soared bravely to the sky. (*To Sforza.*) (Wilt please,
my Lord,
List to my story ?) In his giddy track,
Scarce marked by them who gazed upon the first,
Followed a new-fledged eaglet, fast and well.
Upward they sped, and all eyes on their flight
Gazed with admiring awe, when, suddenly,
The parent bird, struck by a thunderbolt,
Dropped lifeless through the air. The eaglet paused,
And hung upon his wings ; and as his sire
Plashed in the far-down wave, men looked to see him
Flee to his nest affrighted !

Sforza, (with great interest.) Did he so ?

Bianca. My noble Lord, — he had a monarch's heart !
He wheeled a moment in mid air, and shook
Proudly his royal wings, and then right on,
With crest uplifted and unwavering flight,
Sped to the sun's eye, straight and gloriously.

Page. Lady, — is that true ?

Bianca. Ay, — men call those eagles
Sforza the First and Second !” — pp. 203 – 206.

The passages we have given are sufficient to show our readers, that rare poetic and dramatic powers have been evinced by these two plays, and especially by the last. They

will probably join with us in regretting, that the author has not taken more pains with his plot, in both instances ; that he has not labored more upon completing the characters, upon making the transitions more gradual and natural ; that he has not given the pieces that unity of spirit and impression, without which no drama, however poetical in single parts, can stand the test of cool criticism when the applauses of the theatre have died away. We are not at all prepared for the desperate crime of *Bianca* ; almost up to the very moment of the fatal deed, she has appeared to us

“ A perfect woman, nobly planned ; ”

and, when she sacrifices her brother’s life, we experience a violent revulsion of feeling. The poet has wrenched the character from its natural bearings, and we are very unnaturally and undramatically shocked. The plot is not well *motivirt*, to borrow a word from German criticism. The springs of action are not well studied, and the drama, therefore, with all its merits and exquisite beauties, is not an organic whole ; is not what the ancients required by their doctrine of the unities. But no man can read these pieces without acknowledging that Willis has a genius for the drama, which, if he is willing to pay the price, which the highest dramatic excellence demands, the price of long-continued study and labor, — the labor lavished by the sculptor and painter upon their immortal works, — will set him among the foremost, if not at the very head, of the dramatists of our age.

ART. VII.—*Report of the Secretary of War, November 30th, 1839, accompanying the President’s Message to Congress, December 2d, 1839.* 26th Congress, 1st Session. Senate Documents, No. 1. 8vo. pp. 530.

THE document, which we have made the subject of our remarks, is the annual exhibit of the Secretary of War to the President of the United States, of the military condition of the country. It is probably not much read by the people at large. A general impression may prevail that it is too professional to be well understood. With those who look